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SUBJECT: THE KINGDOM FIGHTS SEXUAL HARASSMENT

¶1. (U) Sexual harassment could not be openly discussed in Morocco until a group of women textile workers decided to go on strike at the Manufacture du Morocco, a textile plant in the suburbs of Rabat, because of the extreme sexual harassment company officials committed against their union leader Khadia Khairreddine on November 10, 1995. Khairreddine was fired and then attacked in front of the plant gates by the company supervisor. Workers at the plant, who had been constantly insulted and sexually harassed, walked out and began a sit-in in front of the plant gates which lasted more than 10 days. They demanded that Khairreddine and seventeen of their colleagues be reinstated. This was the first strike against sexual harassment in Morocco and in the Arab world. The support given to these women by civil society invigorated other women's groups to advocate for the protection of female workers. As a result, the 2004 Labor Code condemns sexual harassment in the workplace and makes it a criminal offense in Morocco.

¶2. (U) Sexual harassment in the workplace is a criminal offense under article 503-1 of the revised 2003 Penal Code and article 40 of the 2004 Labor Code which stipulates that "Any person who abuses the authority conferred upon him by his position, to harass another using orders, threats, coercion or any other means in order to obtain sexual favors is guilty of sexual harassment and is punishable by one to two years imprisonment and a fine."

¶3. (U) Jargon free and easy to read books and guides have been written by groups such as the Moroccan Association of Democratic Women (ADFM) and the Centre Fama. These are used in schools, universities, and in workplaces. On March 3, ADFM presented a guide against sexual harassment for young girls on the occasion of the International Day for Women. This guide was funded by the United Nations Population Fund to sensitize young girls on sexual harassment problems and ways to fight against them. This guide was written by young ADFM members after an extensive 2002 study on how women are viewed in the streets.

¶4. (U) In June, two hotel workers, Najla and Souad, were sexually harassed at the Hotel Sofitel Diwan in Rabat. A network of Moroccan nongovernmental organizations (NGO) was created following these incidents. On July 21, the network condemned sexual harassment in the workplace. The "Network to Fight Sexual Harassment in Morocco" (RCHS) includes human rights and women's rights organizations, and unions, e.g., the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH), Moroccan Association of Democratic Women (ADFM), Democratic League for Women's Right (LDDF), Moroccan Center for Human Rights (CMDH), Moroccan Forum for Truth and Justice (FMVJ), Moroccan Workers Union (UMT), and Moroccan Workers Confederation (CDT) Abdellah Lefnatsa, the leader of the Moroccan Workers Union (UMT) created a Blogspot blog at <http://rchsrabat.blogspot.com> to further promote their cause and to help collect signatures for their anti-sexual harassment petition.